

IN THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheet includes a proposed diagram illustrating exemplary timing of signals shown in the circuits of FIGs. 2 and 3.

Attachment: Proposed New Sheet

REMARKS

This is intended as a full and complete response to the Final Office Action dated November 9, 2006, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on February 9, 2007. Applicants submit this response to place the application in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal. Please reconsider the claims pending in the application for reasons discussed below.

Claims 1-22 are pending in the application. Claims 1-22 remain pending following entry of this response. Claims 1, 10, 17, 21, and 22 have been amended. Applicants submit that the amendments do not introduce new matter.

Drawings

As requested by the Examiner, Applicants submit (as proposed FIG. 4) a drawing of an exemplary timing sequence of signals shown in the circuits of Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 that describe the interrelationship among signals CM-i, CLK, DST, A51, A52, A53, A54 and A55.

Upon acceptance by the Examiner, Applicants will submit formal replacement drawing sheets and amend the specification to refer to the drawing in the Brief Description of the Drawings section and in the appropriate location within the Specification directed to Figures 2 and 3.

Claim Objections

Claim 21 is objected to because of formalities. Claim 21 has been amended to more clearly recite the claimed features. The objection is believed to be obviated. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-3, 10, 17 and 21-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Bando* (US 2002/0145930). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

The Examiner bears the initial burden of establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness. See MPEP § 2142. To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness three

basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine the reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Third, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. See MPEP § 2143. The present rejection fails to establish at least the third criteria.

For example, *Bando* fails to teach a command buffer device which receives from the control device a multi-bit status signal which indicates the critical operating state period and a type of critical operating state, as recited in claims 1, 10, 17, 21 and 22. The external command receiving circuit 14 as disclosed in *Bando* (cited by the Examiner as the claimed command buffer device) receives commands, such as read command signal RDC and write command WRC, from the command buffer 12 and the clock signal from the clock buffer 10 and forwards a read pulse or a write pulse WRP to the control circuit 20 (*Bando*, paragraphs 0034 and 0035). *Bando* does not teach, show or suggest that the external command receiving circuit 14 receives any signals from the control circuit 20. More particularly, *Bando* does not teach, show or suggest a command buffer device which receives from the control device a multi-bit status signal which indicates the critical operating state period and a type of critical operating state.

As another example, *Bando* fails to teach that the command buffer device includes buffer circuits respectively assigned to a plurality of impermissible commands for a plurality of critical operating states. The Examiner argues that *Bando* teaches such features in paragraph 30. However, the cited passage is directed only to a refreshing scheme. *Bando* simply does not teach, show or suggest a respective buffer circuit for each impermissible command / operating state.

Therefore, the claims are believed to be allowable, and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Claims 4-9, 11-16, 18-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Bando* in view of *Kirihata et al.* (US 6404689, hereinafter *Kirihata*). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As discussed above, *Bando* fails to teach or suggest all the claim limitations. *Kirihata* discloses a method for hiding a refresh operation. However, the cited references, either alone or in combination, still fail to teach or suggest all the claim limitations. Therefore, the claims are believed to be allowable, and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Having addressed all issues set out in the office action, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that the claims be allowed.

If the Examiner believes any issues remain that prevent this application from going to issue, the Examiner is strongly encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney to discuss strategies for moving prosecution forward toward allowance.

Respectfully submitted, and
S-signed pursuant to 37 CFR 1.4,

/Gero G. McClellan, Reg. No. 44,227/

Gero G. McClellan

Registration No. 44,227

PATTERSON & SHERIDAN, L.L.P.

3040 Post Oak Blvd. Suite 1500

Houston, TX 77056

Telephone: (713) 623-4844

Facsimile: (713) 623-4846

Attorney for Applicant(s)